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Letter dated 30 November 2009 from the Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to enclose herewith the joint statement of their Excellencies, the Prime Ministers of Greece, Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (see annex I), on the occasion of their meeting in Prespa, Greece, on 27 November 2009, together with a letter signed the same day by the three Prime Ministers (see annex II).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annexes could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda items 53 (a) and (d).

(*Signed*) Anastassis **Mitsialis**
Permanent Representative
Ambassador

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Annex I to the letter dated 30 November 2009 from the Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

27 November 2009

We, Prime Ministers George Papandreou, Sali Berisha and Nikola Gruevski, of the three States sharing the Prespa Lakes Basin, met today, 27 November 2009, at Pili, Municipality of Prespa, Greece,

Taking into account the Declaration of the Prime Ministers of our three States of 2 February 2000 on the Creation of the Prespa Park and the Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development of the Prespa Lakes and their Surroundings;

Considering that the Prespa Lakes and their surrounding catchment basin are a unique natural area whose geomorphological, ecological, biodiversity and cultural significance is of international importance, while constituting a fragile and vulnerable ecosystem that is threatened, inter alia, by various human activities, the effects of which are further aggravated by the impacts of climate change;

Recognizing their common responsibility for the conservation of the Prespa ecosystem, its services and functions, as a basis for the sustainable development of the area, including its environmental conservation and viability, economic development and the sustainable livelihoods of its inhabitants, constituting a catalyst for stability and prosperity of the area;

Aware that individual actions of countries are not sufficient to bring about conservation of the ecosystems of Prespa and its cultural heritage, and thus wishing to enhance our transboundary cooperation, at all levels of administration as well as through the effective cooperation of non-governmental organizations and of civil society organizations; and

Taking into account the relevant provisions of international legal instruments in force in the field of environmental protection to which we are parties or signatories, the bilateral agreements in force between our three countries concerning cooperation in the field of environmental protection and sustainable development as well as the fact that only one of the three countries is a member State of the European Union;

We agree on the following:

1. We recognize the valuable experience gained from the trilateral cooperation in the framework of the Prespa Park since 2000, through the operation of the interim Coordination Committee and its secretariat and we acknowledge the valid elements included in the Strategic Action Plan for the Sustainable Development of the Prespa Park elaborated in this framework, as a sound foundation for our further transboundary cooperation.

2. In order to ensure an integrated protection of the ecosystem and the overall sustainable development of the Prespa Lakes Basin, we look forward to the signing on 2 February 2010, the tenth Anniversary of the creation of the Prespa Park and World Wetlands Day, of an agreement between our three countries, with the European Commission as a fourth party, on the protection and sustainable development of the Prespa Lakes Basin, as an expression of our willingness to fully operationalize the Declaration of the Prime Ministers of 2 February 2000.

3. In this context, and based on territorial integrity, mutual benefit and good faith, we commit to further promote our bilateral and multilateral cooperation so as to:

- Enhance integrated water resources management, with emphasis on both quality and quantity aspects of surface and ground waters encompassed in the Prespa Lakes Basin system, including the development of integrated transboundary river basin management plans, according to existing international and European Union standards, frameworks and commitments.
- Prevent, control and reduce pollution affecting the Prespa Lakes Area, based on best available techniques.
- Protect soil resources from, inter alia, erosion and degradation.
- Protect, conserve and promote the sustainable use of biodiversity in the Basin through, inter alia, control of the adverse effects of human and economic activities on natural resources in the Basin, according to the principles of sustainable development.

4. To this end, we commit to further expedite our means of cooperation so as to develop joint plans, strategies and measures, aiming at an effective integration of the environmental considerations into other sectors and economic activities in the Prespa Lakes Basin such as agriculture, tourism, spatial planning, fisheries, forestry, infrastructure development and energy, biodiversity conservation and protected areas management within the Basin.

5. Moreover, we acknowledge cooperation on capacity-building and exchange of experiences, information and know-how as an integral part of our common efforts, aiming, inter alia, at supporting the process of translating local needs into concrete and bankable projects, through peer reviews and assessments, focusing on increased coherence, ownership, alignment and harmonization of related actions.

6. Taking into account that climate change poses serious threats to water resources and ecosystems, such as the Prespa Lakes, aggravating even further their vulnerable conditions and hampering achievement of the above-mentioned objectives, in view of the Fifteenth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP15) to take place in Copenhagen, in December 2009, we commit to joint efforts so as to contribute to a strong and fair agreement in Copenhagen for combating climate change, compatible with sustainable economic growth and prosperity of livelihoods.

7. Along these lines, we emphasize the need to continue developing bridges between our countries so as to improve our knowledge base and responses to common challenges through feasible, ambitious, firm and concrete actions.

8. In this respect, we strongly support an agreement in Copenhagen that will give due emphasis to adaptation aspects, inter alia, through the creation of a framework of action on adaptation as an integral part of the Copenhagen outcomes, that will allow building resilience and defence measures to increased climate variability and climate change, through the application of holistic approaches at the catchment area, for the protection of vulnerable ecosystems and their functions and services, such as the Prespa Lakes, until and beyond 2012.

9. We will spare no efforts so that the Prespa Park becomes and remains a model of its kind as well as an additional reference for peaceful collaboration among our countries.

Annex II to the letter dated 30 November 2009 from the Permanent Representative of Greece to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

27 November 2009

We, Prime Ministers George Papandreou, Sali Berisha and Nikola Gruevski, of the three countries sharing the Prespa Lakes area, met on 27 November 2009, at Pili, Greece, and agreed to further promote our cooperation on environmental issues.

In this context, we look forward to the signing on 2 February 2010, the tenth anniversary of the creation of the Prespa Park and World Wetlands Day, of an agreement on the protection and sustainable development of the Prespa Park area.

We recognize our common responsibility for the conservation of the Prespa ecosystem as a basis for the sustainable development of the area, environmental development and sustainable livelihoods of its inhabitants, which constitutes a catalyst for stability and prosperity in the region.

We believe that our joint action is setting a unique example, as the Prespa Park constitutes the first transboundary protected area in south-eastern Europe and will contribute to increasing awareness of the importance of coordinated policies on environmental issues in our region and beyond.

By our initiative, we wish to demonstrate our support to your efforts for an agreement at the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which will take place in Copenhagen in December 2009.

(*Signed*) Sali **Berisha**
Prime Minister

(*Signed*) George **Papandreou**
Prime Minister

(*Signed*) Nikola **Gruevski**
Prime Minister